8: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Bedouin MS4

"Well," I persisted, "the matter does not seem to trouble you a great deal."

"No indeed," with an even broader grin if that were possible. "It does not trouble me at all. Just as soon as I get out of here, I will go and steal somebody else's. Who knows? Perhaps I may have more than I had before."

The tribal fights that keep the country in a continual state of turmoil are little more than glorified raids for the sake of plunder. They intensify the poverty of the community, for legitimate trade is handicapped, and this irregular exchange of goods cannot in the nature of the case benefit the whole society, however much it may temporarily enrich individuals. But life without the excitement of these raids seems to the desert nomad a tame and a stale thing, hardly worth living. On the other hand, personal property, such as is kept in tents, is as sacredly individual as it is with us, and its theft is keenly resented. The conception that every man's home is his castle is one of the most fundamental ideas of the Arab, and when the crew of a gunboat many years ago attempted to search the inner quarters of a house in Dibai for firearms, the resulting indignation was so intense that foreigners found themselves unable to enter that district for nearly ten years. The household belongings that the Bedouin keeps in his tent may be poor things but they are very much his own.

This life of the desert, with its poverty and hardships and its primitive economic conditions, has nevertheless so worked its charm on the Bedouin nomad that he longs for nothing else. The Bedouin with his intense individualism seems particularly adapted to the desert. He loves its vast distances and its solitude. Anything less

PALESTINE SYRIA BEDOUINS MJ4

423 general. The idea of encouraging small and medium landholdings was incorporated in the new Syrian Constitution of 1950.

●578 427 659 In the summer of 1951 violent clashes occurred in Syria between tenants and the agents of the big landlords, a development which testifies to the tenseness of the situation. Angry complaints were voiced in the Syrian Parliament against the government which does not challenge the encroachment on State Domains by the rich landowning families, and it was alleged that in the Jezirah tribal sheikhs connive with them by leasing away land on which the tribesmen enjoyed traditional grazing rights.[1]

Failure to make provisions for adequate conditions of land holding tends to retard tribal settlement. The enactment of sweeping land reforms, however, cannot be envisaged as long as the few, but powerful, land-owning families control the administration, and make even the allocation of State lands to small owners difficult.

Mandatory Palestine

162 361 Since World War I there have been no true Bedouin in Palestine, only semi-nomads. In the 1930's 47 9% out of the 66 55% nomads of Palestine[2] were encamped in the Beersheba district of the Negev, the rest scattered in the other parts of the country.

361 233 The tribes of Beersheba are the Tarabin, Tayaha, Azazma,

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1. New York Times, August 13, 1951
2. Report of 1931 census of Palestine

land reform on which successful tribal settlement will ultimately 421
depend, but as the land-owning families exercise control over the
indigenous administrations, the prospects for sweeping changes do
not seem bright.

Transformation of the Sheikh

With the process of sedentarization the tribal sheikh under- 166X
goes a profound political and social transformation.

In the traditional tribal society inter-tribal political 578●
activities were confined to disputes over water and grazing rights. 622
Since the 19th century sheikhs have become involved in big power 664
politics. Bedouin history since the First World War abounds with
cases of tribal chiefs being pre-occupied with the political
issues of the country. At present the tribal leaders constitute a
very active element in the parliamentary life of Syria and Iraq.
While the sheikhs of the Transjordanian tribes have in the past
not taken a prominent part in the political activities of their
country, they have taken sides in the main controversial issue of
anglophile government circles versus pan-Arab, anti-foreign
Nationalists. Mithkal Pasha, the sheikh of the Beni-Sakhr, was
the avowed friend of the Mufti while Hamad el Jasir, the sheikh of
the Howeitat was an active supporter of Abdullah. 1)

The social changes which the sheikh undergoes are consider- 622
able. His household becomes substantially enlarged by addition 178
of a great number of slaves, specialists in various tasks. The
wives of the sheikh have chamber maids at their disposal.

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1. Oppenheim, 1943, pp. 182-183

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1: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala
Bedouins MJ4

Meheyd, above all men." He cleared his throat and spat, as if all mankind were dirt. Then he continued: "And thou art in need of a *rafiq*?" 609

"That is so," I replied; "and this letter, which thou holdest in thy hands, thou wilt transmit immediately to thy *sheykh*, for it contains a personal message from Amir Fuaz."

Before I could prevent it, Ali tore open the letter and began to read aloud:

"Al-illah, by the Adored One! Peace be with thee, dispenser of protection! By the Dispensation of Allah, let this stranger live under thy countenance like a son of thy father. Befriend him as if he were my own eyes. Guard and preserve my brother when he lodges with thee or when thou settest him on his way. I would trust him to none but thee alone, who walkest with a clear conscience in the sight of Allah. May the Lord lengthen thy days, O thou rich in life, and let us evermore dwell side by side in friendship."

At this point, Ali interrupted his reading with copious supplications for heaven's blessings and rewards on Amir Fuaz. He had never suspected that the young Rueyli chief could be capable of such gentle virtues and tender emotions. He was visibly overwhelmed. He raised his voice and resumed: 578 609

"Praise thou the Lord! For He is so magnanimous and bountiful that He has bestowed upon me, His humble slave, so rich a gift. He, the Gracious and Merciful, granted me the wonderful opportunity of relieving thy ally and our brother, Barjas ibn Hedeyb, of seventy mares."

1: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala
Bedouins MJ4

609 578 Ali jumped as if stung by a tarantula. In place of the previous outpouring of blessings there now issued from his lips a flood of wild imprecations and sulphurous curses on the head of the Amir. Again he raged like a madman. His outbreak was ably seconded by the other Bedouins, and once more bedlam broke loose in the courtyard, men and animals creating pandemonium. In their insensate fury, the men began to belabour the excited and frightened sheep, asses, and goats with their flexible camel-sticks, as if they had the hated Rueyli chief himself under their hands. Even I, the innocent cause of this outburst of frenzy, became the target of Ali's choicest vituperation. How could I associate myself with such a notorious cutthroat and common bandit? It took a considerable space of time for Ali to calm down again—and with him the whole audience—and, in a voice still agitated, he read out the remainder of the letter:

"May the Lord take pity on thy saddened thoughts and may cheerful reflection on the Inevitable console thee and tranquilize thy soul." (I couldn't help laughing out loud at this; whereupon Ali scowled at me most ungraciously. "All is fleeting, but all is also preordained by Allah. May the corpse of him who casts doubt on the bravery of my horsemen be flung aside without burial. God's infallible acts are manifest, and in the light of these events, which were inevitable, thou shouldst acknowledge the truth of my words." ("Aha!" I said to myself. "What a brilliant idea! To hold Allah responsible for the theft of seventy mares!") "Allah bless my beautiful and virtuous kinswoman who is in the keeping of thy brother." (Tarfa, a sister of Amir Fuaz.) "May

1: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala MD:
Bedouins M34

the position of the heavenly bodies be of better augury for thee! God is omnipotent!" 609 578

Ali, sunk in meditation, seemed disturbed by a thousand conflicting thoughts. At length, however, he dutifully kissed the face and back of this typical example of Bedouin diplomacy. Secretly, I had to admire the respect accorded in Arabia even to one's deadly enemy. [577]

Ali grasped my hand. Anger still lingered in his eyes, but his voice sounded pleasant enough as he said to me: "This letter, my friend, is just about as good as a recommendation from Iblis" (the devil), and with a grimace of contempt he tossed it on the fire. I was only just in time to snatch the already singed sheet of paper from the flames; but, as a matter of fact, neither Ali nor I ever had the courage to present the letter to either of the Fid'an chiefs.

To my great delight, Ali offered himself as my *rafiq* for the journey to the Jesirah (Mesopotamia). Within two days he had ferreted out a second-hand Ford car to carry us to the Euphrates.